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VOC FOR IOP/FN  
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## INDIA'S BIRTH CONTROL INCENTIVES

ANNCR:

IN INDIA'S TWENTY-NINE YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE, A PATTERN HAS EMERGED OF ECONOMIC GROWTH BEING OVERTAKEN BY POPULATION GROWTH. THE GOVERNMENT IS THREATENING SOME COMPULSORY METHODS OF CONTROL IF THE VOLUNTARY ONES ARE INEFFECTIVE. WE HEAR MORE ON THIS NOW FROM VOA'S ANITA CHAPMAN:

VOICE:

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT THIS WEEK ANNOUNCED A NEW PROGRAM OF INCENTIVES IN ITS CONTINUING STRUGGLE TO REDUCE ITS POPULATION. PAST MEASURES, IT ADMITS, HAVE NOT WORKED WELL ENOUGH TO SLASH A GROWTH RATE OF ONE MILLION PERSONS A MONTH.

FOR THE FIRST TIME THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING WARNED THAT UNLESS THE POPULATION RESPONDS TO THE NEW INCENTIVES, A PROGRAM OF FORCED STERILIZATION MAY HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED.

THE IDEA OF FORCED STERILIZATION IS NOT NEW. IT HAS LONG BEEN DEBATED AT BOTH STATE AND NATIONAL LEVELS OF INDIAN GOVERNMENT. NOR IS IT AS SHOCKING A THOUGHT IN THE SUB-CONTINENT AS IT STILL IS IN THE WEST.

INDIA HAS PREFERRED STERILIZATION TO OTHER AVAILABLE METHODS OF CONTROLLING BIRTHS, FINDING IT BEST SUITED TO A LARGELY UNLETTERED POPULATION UNPREPARED TO USE MORE TECHNICAL METHODS. ONE INDIAN STATE, PUNJAB, IS ACTUALLY PREPARING LEGISLATION TO IMPOSE STERILIZATION WHERE FAMILIES WITH TWO OR THREE CHILDREN REFUSE IT VOLUNTARILY. STATISTICS SHOW WHAT

HAS HAPPENED IN THE PUNJAB. A RECORD GRAIN HARVEST IS EXPECTED THIS YEAR, YET THERE WILL BE LESS DOMESTIC FOOD PER PERSON THAN FIVE YEARS AGO. FOR IN THAT FIVE YEARS THE STATE'S POPULATION HAS INCREASED BY THE EQUIVALENT OF THAT OF WEST GERMANY.

ANOTHER NORTHERN STATE, HARYANA, IS USING DRASTIC ECONOMIC MEASURES TO DISCOURAGE BIRTHS. IT IS REFUSING ROUTINE GOVERNMENT BENEFITS TO FAMILIES WHO WILL NOT COOPERATE IN BIRTH CONTROL, ESSENTIAL BENEFITS SUCH AS LOANS FOR HOUSING OR FOR PURCHASE OF GRAIN IN BULK WHEN THE PRICE IS LOW.

EARLIER IN THE WEEK PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI, IN SPEAKING OF BIRTH CONTROL, WARNED "THERE ARE STRONG STEPS THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE TO TAKE THAT WILL NOT BE LIKED BY ALL". THOUGH THE HEALTH MINISTER INSISTED THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT PLANNING ANY LAW AS SWEEPING AS THAT OF THE PUNJAB, HE ADDED: AT THIS TIME. SO THIS COMPULSORY MEASURE MAY ONE DAY BE IMPOSED AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL ALSO.

JS/RCS